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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SANAA 001578

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NP/ECC - CROUCH; DOE FOR NNSA - LONGSWORTH; DOE  
FOR NNSA/RTR - WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/27/2014

TAGS: [KNNP](#) [ENRG](#) [KSTC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [YM](#) [IAEA](#)

SUBJECT: YEMEN'S NATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION (NATEC):  
"YEMEN WANTS TO BE A MODEL COUNTRY"

REF: A. BAHRAIN-ABRAHAM 6/1/2004 LETTER  
B. LONGSWORTH-BAHRAN 3/31/2004 LETTER  
C. SECSTATE 71639  
D. 03 SANAA 2142  
E. 03 SECSTATE 222302

Classified By: Ambassador Edmund J. Hull for reasons b, d and f

11. (u) This is an action request; see paragraphs 4-6.

12. (c) Summary: In a 6/23 meeting with the Ambassador, Yemen's National Atomic Energy Commission (NATEC) Director Moustapha Bahran renewed earlier requests for assistance on border security and radiological detection equipment (reftels). Bahran initially cited alleged "promises" by the Departments of State and Energy, but when pressed by the Ambassador acknowledged that an agreement to cooperate does not equate to promises of specific deliverables. While acknowledging that the May visit of a Radiological Threat Reduction (RTR) team was a positive step and that Yemen is not as high a priority as Eastern Europe, Bahran continued to push for increased cooperation on border security, specifically radiological detection equipment for key points of entry and technical training. He suggested that Yemen could be a regional model on radiological safety/security and made a general offer to discuss assistance on non-proliferation issues with U/S Bolton. End summary.

DEBUNKING NATEC'S VIEW OF DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY "PROMISES" -  
YEMEN AS A REGIONAL MODEL?

13. (c) After some initial exchanges, Bahran launched into an explanation of his request for enhanced cooperation on border security and what he characterized as "promises" from the Department of Energy made during his July 2003 trip to Washington. He provided a copy of his June 1 letter to Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham (ref a - see para. 7 for

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text) and said he is "pleading" with Secretary Abraham to move forward on borders. Ambassador firmly suggested that Bahran should not say "promises have been made" when there is no documentation to support any official commitment and NATEC has not worked through the Embassy on the request. Bahran pushed back, saying that his 2003 trip to the U.S. was coordinated through the Embassy and there was discussion of what commitments were made at that time. (Note: According to ref e, Bahran requested border monitoring equipment from NNSA and "DOE officials expressed interest in the request for joint cooperation and pledged to provide a formal answer pending prioritization of other Second Line of Defense projects." A negative response was formally provided by reftel c, which Post provided to NATEC on April 3 and NATEC acknowledged receiving.)

14. (c) Ambassador explained that there is no record of specific commitments (ref e), and trying to make general expressions of support into something more does not encourage cooperation. Bahran maintained that there were promises to help, but eventually acknowledged that there were not commitments to specific items. He also said it is good to engage in dialogue and finally admitted that "for the sake of security" he may have let his expectations shape Washington's responses as promises. Bahran reiterated his request for four radiological monitoring devices at four points of entry (Sana'a airport, Aden and Mukullah ports and the land border crossing at Haradh) that could cost upwards of \$150,000 each. Discussing Deputy Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration Longsworth's March letter to NATEC (ref b), he and the Ambassador agreed that while Yemen is not as high a priority as Eastern Europe, it could possibly be a model for the region because there is value in setting a standard to increase security. Bahran noted that the letter also promised a response to Yemen's request for a Memorandum of Understanding (ref d), and renewed his oft-repeated request for a U.S.-Yemen MOU to facilitate additional cooperation.

NATEC DIRECTOR OFFERS PERSONAL SUPPORT FOR NON-PROLIFERATION

15. (c) At the end of the meeting, Bahran requested Ambassador's help in arranging for him to talk to

Undersecretary Bolton. He said he is willing to play "any role allowed by the ROYG system" in aiding non-proliferation efforts. Ambassador commented on the Arab world's "requirement" to focus on Israeli capabilities and asked how this would affect any role Bahran might play. Bahran confirmed that this is a concern, but said he would be a strong advocate for practical approaches to non-proliferation and is open to discussion about what he can/cannot do.

U.S. SUPPORT FOR YEMEN AS A REGIONAL MODEL?

16. (c) Comment/action request: Once the issue of purported promises was sorted out, Dr. Bahran forcefully made the case that Yemen needs both equipment and technical assistance. While Yemen is not a high threat for supplying radiological materials for a "dirty bomb," it is a transit country for conventional weapons, especially to the Horn of Africa, and there is deterrent value in assisting to secure its borders. Post would therefore support such an effort to the extent it complements other counter-terrorism programs. Accordingly, Post requests a response to Bahran's specific requests to the Department of Energy, as outlined in reftel a (see text in para. 8) with an eye toward using Yemen to set the standard for other Gulf countries. End comment/action request.

17. Begin text of NATEC-Secretary Abraham letter:

(Official letterhead)

Mr. Spencer Abraham  
Secretary

SIPDIS  
Department of Energy  
United States of America

June 1st 2004  
No. 87/878/2004

Subject: Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources

Dear Mr. Secretary of Energy,

The National Atomic Energy Commission (NATEC) presents its compliments to you. This is in reference to the letter received from Mr. Paul Longsworth, Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation at NNSA, of March 12, 2004 and the recent visit of the DOE team to Yemen during (16-19) May 2004 regarding the above subject. NATEC appreciates the US government interest in assisting the Republic of Yemen in upgrading the safety and security of radioactive sources.

It is well known that the Republic of Yemen has a strong interest in the safety and security of radioactive sources in the Republic of Yemen, the Region and the World at large. This is reflected when one takes a first hand look at the Yemeni National System of control of radioactive sources as well as Yemen's leading role in the international arena in bringing this issue to the attention of the world's community. In particular, Yemen has been closely working with governments such as the US, the European, and the Australian governments in drafting and adopting by consensus all related IAEA GC resolutions for the last three years. In fact NATEC has started its international effort on this very important subject one year prior to the 9/11 tragic events.

This is based on our stated goal to be a model in this area not only in the region but also to become a universal model. In order to do that, we have been successful as far as establishing a strong control system of safety and security of radioactive sources in Yemen. Yet, we can not claim neither perfection, nor complete effectiveness. The reason is that we still need to monitor and control our borders as far as radioactive sources are concerned. As of today we do not have a system in place controlling possible illicit trafficking of nuclear and radioactive materials.

During visits, discussion, and letters we have asked the US government (State Department, DOE, NNSA and NRC) and the IAEA for help. We have studied our priorities in this regard. We know what needs to be done. What we need urgently is the following:

- 1 - Border radiation monitoring equipment (stationary and portable).
- 2 - Training of relevant personnel to carry out this task and maintain the equipment.

Promises has (sic) been verbally made, but till today nothing has materialized. Furthermore, I had the honor of sending you a proposed MOU, which was acknowledged by Mr. Longsworth, but I am still waiting for a positive answer. The proposed MOU will create an umbrella through which strong partnership can be formalized. True, we are already partners, but this partnership is yet to be formalized.

As much as I express gratitude for your excellent cooperation on this subject and many others to come, I believe that additional efforts are needed such that our common and noble goals can be realized.

The National Atomic Energy Commission of the Republic of Yemen avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Department of Energy of the United States of America the assurance of its highest consideration. Thank you and please accept my best regards

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Moustafa Bahran  
Science and Technology Advisor to the President of the  
Republic  
Chairman - National Atomic Energy Commission

End text of NATEC-Secretary Abraham letter.

HULL